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# The Soviet Military On SDI

by

Mary C. Fitzgerald

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Mary C. Fitzgerald

*Naval Warfare Operations Division*

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Per Ms. Pam Vaklyes, Center for Naval  
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## Introduction

> Numerous Western analysts have suggested that all American assessments of SDI should proceed not only from a consideration of American intentions, but also from the outlook of Soviet perceptions.<sup>1 2</sup> Since 23 March 1983, the prevailing tone of Soviet military writings on SDI has been overwhelmingly negative. Myron Hedlin has concluded that <sup>thi</sup> "[t]his harsh reaction to a U.S. initiative still years from realization suggests both a strong concern about the ultimate impact of these plans on the strategic balance, and a perceived opportunity for scoring propaganda points."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the present review of Soviet writings since <sup>Pres. tent</sup> Reagan's so-called "Star Wars" speech has yielded both objective Soviet concerns and regressions to psychological warfare. This, in turn, has necessitated a careful effort to separate rhetoric from more official assessments of SDI.

While there has long been dispute in the West over the validity of Soviet statements, they have time and again been subsequently confirmed in Soviet hardware, exercises, and operational behavior. Some Western analysts will nonetheless contend that the Soviet statements under examination in this study are merely a "commodity for export."<sup>3</sup> Here it should be emphasized that the contrary contention has likewise been alive and well over time. In 1975, Frank R. Barnett argued that "it would be inconceivable that the Moscow regime would risk deluding its own military personnel on such a mass scale, simply to confound the West."<sup>4</sup> About a decade later, Benjamin Lambeth confirmed that "...it has long been recognized by Western analysts that the Soviets can

scarcely lie to their own officers charged with implementing Soviet defense guidance merely in order to deceive outsiders."<sup>5</sup> Numerous Western researchers of all persuasions, in fact, are convinced that Soviet writings provide an expansive display-case for *de facto* elite perceptions.<sup>6</sup>

#### SOVIET DOCTRINAL CONTEXT

Since Reagan's so-called "Star Wars" speech, Soviet commentators have dwelt increasingly on the unique, double-edged nature of defense in a nuclear age. In 1983, G. Gerasimov argued that "anti-missile defense can do almost nothing for a country subjected to a nuclear surprise attack; it most suits an attacking country trying to reduce the strength of a retaliatory strike."<sup>7</sup> A. G. Arbatov explained further in 1984 that "[d]efense given the accumulated arsenals of nuclear weapons is not primarily based on the capability for direct protection against these weapons, but on the capability to inflict an annihilating counterstrike in the event of an opponent's attack. The means of protection turn into their very opposite; that is, they serve the purpose of aggression inasmuch as they are able to degrade or neutralize the counterstrike of the side that has been subjected to an attack."<sup>8</sup>

In general, the Soviet response to SDI is that its offensive aspects outweigh its proclaimed function as a defensive system. As perceived by Soviet military elites, the offensive nature of SDI consists primarily in the U.S. intentions that inform it.

### *Military Superiority/First-Strike Capability*

The Soviet military charges that SDI is a program designed to acquire "military superiority". In his answers to a TASS correspondent's questions, Marshal Sokolov announced the following: "The Pentagon is now rushing into space. What for? Once again, to attempt to achieve military superiority over the USSR, this time through space. President R. Reagan's so-called 'Strategic Defense' Initiative is only called 'defensive' as camouflage, while it is in fact aimed at creating a new class of weapon, a space strike weapon."<sup>9</sup>

In his 1985 *Pravda* article commemorating the Russian Revolution, Sokolov reiterated the charge: "The White House is seeking ways of achieving military superiority...by developing a fundamentally new type of weapon, space strike weapons."<sup>10</sup> Among others, Col. V. Gorenko has insisted that the essence of the U.S. militarization of space is "to achieve strategic superiority over the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries."<sup>11</sup> Taken at face value, this theme has a palpable propaganda content. But Soviet military doctrine on the concepts in question indicates that over time they have acquired a quite specific military significance independent of their prominence in Soviet propaganda scripts.<sup>12</sup>

How do the Soviets define "military superiority"? The answer to this question is crucial for understanding the Soviet military's perceptions of SDI. Prior to the existence of parity, attained by the Soviets in the late 1960s-early 1970s, "superiority" was used either as an amorphous concept, or in the traditional sense of an overwhelming

preponderance of nuclear might. With few exceptions, this ragged usage prevailed until L. I. Brezhnev's January 1977 address at Tula.

At Tula, Brezhnev denied that the USSR was striving for military superiority with the aim of delivering a first strike.<sup>13</sup> "First strike" was understood in the Western sense, as a unilateral damage-limiting capacity in all-out war, achieved through some combination of offensive means and active and passive defensive means (ABM, counterforce against land and sea, civil defense).<sup>14</sup> The cornerstone message of Tula on "superiority" was that neither side could achieve a unilateral damage-limiting capability, or first-strike capability. Defense of the population against the inevitable retaliatory strike was unattainable, - both technologically and financially.

The present review of Soviet writings on SDI indicates that the anti-SDI campaign represents both a resurrection and clear-cut continuation of the Tula line on these politico-military concepts. Soviet military commentators have consistently charged that SDI is a program to acquire a first-strike capability. In 1984, Marshal Ustinov affirmed that "[t]his 'anti-missile decision' by R. Reagan is aimed at securing for U.S. militarists the ability to deliver a first nuclear strike against the Soviet Union with impunity."<sup>15</sup> In his lengthy *Pravda* article on the ABM Treaty in June 1985, Marshal Akhromeyev asserted that the proposed SDI "is giving the U.S. the capability to deliver a first strike in hopes that a retaliatory strike on American territory will be prevented."<sup>16</sup> Akhromeyev reiterated the concern in his *Pravda* article that was reprinted in *The Washington Post*: the essence of "Star Wars"

is "to acquire for the U.S. the capability to deliver a first nuclear strike on the Soviet Union with impunity...."<sup>17</sup> Among others, General of the Army V. M. Shabanov echoed Akhromeyev verbatim in a later article in *Red Star*.<sup>18</sup>

Engr.-Col. M. Rebrov has charged that "the space anti-missile system is intended not only for the destruction of the 'opponent's' satellites and strategic missiles after they have been launched. Pentagon strategists hope to deliver a first (!) strike with impunity. And this is the main point."<sup>19</sup> Gen.-Lt. D. Volkogonov noted that "if the U.S. succeeds in developing such a system...the American aggressors would have an opportunity to choose a particularly convenient moment for a preemptive strike."<sup>20</sup>

Throughout the anti-SDI campaign, Soviet commentators have consistently stressed that a first-strike capability issues from the conjunction of U.S. offensive and defensive systems. In 1983, Lt. Col. Yu. Mikhaylov noted that "[p]lans to develop a large-scale anti-missile defense system, with a simultaneous buildup of nuclear arms, pursue the aim of preparing to deliver a nuclear first strike."<sup>21</sup> Ye. Velikhov has expanded on the theme: "The fact that the extensive U.S. anti-missile defense system is viewed by U.S. strategists as one of the means of ensuring a nuclear first strike is also confirmed by the U.S. administration's refusal to pledge not to make first use of nuclear weapons. At the same time, it is pursuing an entire range of measures aimed at building up its first-strike potential (deploying medium-range missiles in Western Europe; developing the MX, Trident II, and Navstar systems; and others)."<sup>22</sup>

General of the Army Shabanov has charged that in practice, "the U.S. is 'combining' efforts on the SDI program with the development and expansion of offensive systems."<sup>23</sup> Marshal Akhromeyev asserted that the projected SDI "is a most important element in the integrated offensive potential of the side that has created it...and provides an opportunity for the U.S. to deliver a first strike...."<sup>24</sup>

The recurrent Soviet charge that SDI is a program to disarm the Soviet Union stems logically from this perception regarding SDI's role in a U.S. first-strike capability. Yu. V. Andropov leveled it first in his initial response to Reagan's speech, but prominent Soviet military commentators have echoed the concern. Marshal Sokolov announced that "...the anti-missile defense shield is designed to thwart a retaliatory strike from the USSR, and to 'get' in flight, so to speak, the Soviet missiles that have survived a U.S. first nuclear strike."<sup>25</sup> Marshal Akhromeyev has argued that the essence of "Star Wars" is to "deprive it [the Soviet Union]...of the capability for a retaliatory strike."<sup>26</sup> Among others, Generals of the Army A. Yepishev and V. Shabanov, and Cols. V. Chernyshev and L. Semeyko have likewise echoed the original Andropov formula.<sup>27</sup>

A major component of the Soviet perception that SDI is primarily offensive is the contention that the space-based systems will have the capability to strike targets anywhere on the earth. Marshal Ustinov, for one, warned of this capability in a 1983 *Pravda* article: "...the USSR has suggested to the U.S. that no strike weapons should be deployed in space, and it is awaiting a response. If there is no response, then we will be unable to disregard the U.S. intentions to turn space into a

theater of war by deploying in it strike forces capable of aiming not only at targets in space, but also at our entire planet."<sup>28</sup> Marshal Sokolov concurred with the premise in 1985: "What is Washington really planning? To create an anti-missile defense shield over the U.S. and, at the same time, to deploy first-strike strategic offensive arms and new space-based strategic forces designed to strike targets on earth, at sea, in the atmosphere, and in space."<sup>29</sup> Marshal Akhromeyev has likewise asserted that the SDI systems "are in fact strike weapons for strikes against targets that belong to the probable opponent in all spheres."<sup>30</sup>

The writings of Col. Semeyko are representative of the Soviet charge that SDI will have the capability to strike ground targets: "The practical implementation of this scenario could, or so they claim, not only result in the destruction of the USSR Armed Forces, its key industrial targets, and its points of state and military command and control, but also, at the same time, protect the U.S. against the consequences of a nuclear catastrophe."<sup>31</sup>

#### *Dialectic of Arms Development*

To the original Reagan administration claim that SDI will provide us with a world free of nuclear weapons, the Soviets have replied by maintaining that, on the contrary, SDI will in fact be the "catalyst" of an uncontrollable race in both offensive and defensive arms. Shortly before his death, in an interview with CNN's Stuart Loory, K. U. Chernenko set the line by predicting that "[t]he militarization of space...would become the catalyst of an uncontrollable arms race in all

directions."<sup>32</sup> Variations on the "catalyst" theme, like those on the themes of "military superiority"/first-strike capability, have functioned as propaganda devices in past anti-American campaigns. Like the others, however, the "catalyst" theme proceeds from one of the cornerstones of Soviet military thought: it is the layman's version of the Marxist-Leninist law of unity and struggle of opposites, or dialectic of arms development.

This dialectic--the process wherein every means of attack generates a new means of defense, and every means of defense generates a new means of attack--has been crucial for shaping long-term Soviet force development programs. From 1965 to 1976, the proponents of nuclear force development held center stage precisely because of the open-ended nature of the dialectic of arms development. While they were prepared to concede that all-out nuclear war would result in unacceptable damage in present-day conditions, they deemed it "indisputable that, in all countries that have nuclear weapons, means and methods of active and passive defense against these weapons and their carriers will be perfected."<sup>33</sup>

Col. Ye. Rybkin clarified the premise in late 1965: "There is a possibility of developing and creating new means of waging war that are capable of reliably parrying an opponent's nuclear strikes."<sup>34</sup> Over a decade later, V. M. Bondarenko was even more explicit: "Granted the potential opponents do have the weapons for mutual destruction, then the side that first manages to create a means of defense against them will acquire a decisive advantage. The history of military-technological

development is replete with examples wherein weapons that seemed irresistible...have, within a certain time, been countered by sufficiently effective means of defense...."<sup>35</sup>

L. I. Brezhnev broke two grounds of Soviet military policy with his 1977 address at Tula. First, he defined "military superiority" as the possession of a first-strike capability. This was understood as a unilateral damage-limiting capacity in all-out war, achieved through some combination of offensive means and active and passive defensive means (ABM, counterforce against land and sea, civil defense).<sup>36</sup> Second, he pronounced the impossibility of either side's attaining "military superiority," or limiting damage in an all-out nuclear war to acceptable levels, and thus pronounced the impossibility of either side's developing Bondarenko's "sufficiently effective means of defense." As V. I. Zamkovoï explained: "The historical struggle...between weapons of attack and weapons of defense will apparently be tilted in the future in favor of weapons of attack." Under these circumstances, "the very idea of achieving military superiority...becomes absurd...." The ineluctable development of nuclear weapons "has led to their beginning, in a certain sense, to negate themselves...."<sup>37</sup>

Western analysts sometimes assert that the Soviets have never viewed offensive nuclear forces as absolute weapons.<sup>38</sup> Neither have the Soviets viewed defensive weapons as absolute: it is the nature of the dialectic of arms development to be continuous. Since Tula, however, authoritative Soviet political, military, and other commentators have

consistently reiterated the Brezhnev formula: neither side can achieve "military superiority", read first-strike capability, read "sufficiently effective means of defense" because the dialectic of arms development will be tilted in the future in favor of offensive weapons.

The dialectic of arms development is the process wherein every means of attack generates a new means of defense. But the process continues: every means of defense then generates a new means of attack, and so on. In other words, every weapon breeds its own counter-weapon. This inseverable connection between defensive and offensive weapons, between every weapon and its counter-weapon, has been stressed by numerous military commentators during the anti-SDI campaign. In his 1985 *Pravda* article, Marshal Sokolov asserted the following: "In signing the term-less ABM Treaty, the sides agreed at that time that an indissoluble interconnection exists between strategic offensive and defensive arms. It was recognized at that time that only mutual restraint in the sphere of ABM systems can contain the arms race and make it possible to advance along the road of limiting and reducing strategic offensive weapons."<sup>39</sup>

Marshal Akhromeyev has noted that "[a] close interconnection objectively exists between offensive and defensive strategic systems."<sup>40</sup> He has also emphasized that this "interconnection...is enduring and objective in nature, irrespective of the technical level of development reached by those [offensive and defensive] arms."<sup>41</sup> General of the Army Shabanov likewise referred to this objective interconnection, and reiterated that it was indeed reflected in the preamble of

the ABM Treaty.<sup>42</sup> Among others, Col. V. Chernyshev has charged that the development of SDI "will lead only to an expansion of the arms race according to the law 'action generates counter-action'."<sup>43</sup>

In his 1985 book, Marshal Ogarkov made a statement that was groundbreaking for Soviet doctrine on strategic defense in a nuclear age. Prior to 1985, Ogarkov had faithfully subscribed to the mainstream Soviet line on the dialectic of arms development. In his 1978 *Kommunist* article, he explained that "the history of war convincingly testifies, for example, to the constant contradiction between the means of attack and defense. The appearance of new means of attack has always [inevitably] led to the creation of corresponding means of counter-action, and this in the final analysis has led to the development of new methods for conducting engagements, battles, and operations [and the war in general].... *This also applies fully to nuclear-missile weapons, whose rapid development stimulated military-scientific theory and practice to actively develop means and methods of counter-action. The appearance of means of defense against weapons of mass destruction in turn prompted the improvement of nuclear-missile means of attack.*"<sup>44</sup>

The foregoing passage was repeated verbatim in Ogarkov's 1982 book, with the addition of the words in brackets.<sup>45</sup> In the 1985 book, however, Ogarkov made several significant changes in his standard discussion of this dialectical law. First, the sentences italicized above did not appear in the analogous passage. Second, he added a discussion that had never appeared before. World War I, he said, had led to a situation wherein the defense proved to be stronger than the offense. In the course of World War II, however, a new contradiction

arose: the means of offense proved to be stronger than the means of defense. As a result, during the war and especially in the post-war period, "means of defense were developed at an accelerated rate...whose skillful use at a certain stage *balanced* the means of offense and defense to some degree."<sup>46</sup>

By excising the italicized sentences of 1978 and 1982, and replacing them with the notion of a "balance" in nuclear means of offense and defense in 1985, Ogarkov may be telling his readers that he sees no military utility in the further "improvement of nuclear-missile means of attack."<sup>47</sup> He may in fact be referring to a neutralization of nuclear weapons in general. This hypothesis is supported by his removal of a sentence that had always appeared in his previous discussions of the law of unity and struggle of opposites: "This [the law] applies fully to nuclear-missile weapons,...."

#### *Mutual Deterrence*

The intricate relationship between anti-missile defense and strategic stability actually became an issue about two decades ago. As Raymond Garthoff has explained: "Also by late 1969, the political and military leaders of both the United States and the Soviet Union had concluded that the greatest possible danger to (and certain cost in maintaining) the strategic arms balance was the conjunction of possibilities for the development of both ABM and MIRV. Either of them could be destabilizing; both would surely be.... [T]he leaders both in Moscow and Washington had by that time decided that ABM limitation was the more feasible and the more necessary of the two, and that MIRV control was both less feasible and less surely desirable."<sup>48</sup>

Writing in 1980, G. Trofimenko argued that the creation by the Soviet Union of a strategic arsenal comparable to the U.S. strategic arsenal, not only in the number of systems but also in quality, had radically changed the strategic picture. The American force was neutralized by the Soviet Union's force, he explained, "and the trend towards mutual deterrence of the sides, not in words but in fact, came to be dominant."<sup>49</sup>

Garthoff has also noted that during the key formative period of Soviet arms control policy, "there were a number of very clear and explicit endorsements in *Military Thought* by influential Soviet military leaders of the concepts of mutual assured retaliation and mutual deterrence."<sup>50</sup> He has likewise clarified the connection between these concepts. Mutual deterrence in Soviet writings "is usually expressed in terms of assured retaliatory capability which would devastate the aggressor,.... This formula avoids identification with the specific content of the American concept of 'mutual assured destruction,' often expressed in terms of a countervalue capability for destroying a specified percentage of the opponent's industry and population. This American interpretation is much more limited than the Soviet recognition of mutual deterrence resting on mutual capability for devastating retaliation unacceptable to a rational potential initiator of war, without calculations of arbitrary industrial and population losses which theoretically would be acceptable costs."<sup>51</sup>

Writing in *Kommunist* in 1981, A. Arbatov articulated the Soviet acceptance of "Mutual Assured Destruction" (M.A.D.) with an explicitness

rarely encountered in Soviet writings\*: "Let us recall that by the end of the 1960s, as strategic parity took shape between the USSR and the U.S., the U.S. leadership was compelled to acknowledge that the Soviet Union had acquired an indisputable ability to destroy a hypothetical aggressor by a retaliatory strike. This possibility was called a capacity for 'assured destruction' as a result of retaliation, and the U.S. could not help reckon with the fact that it had arisen more or less symmetrically for the two sides."<sup>52</sup>

G. Gerasimov subsequently announced that "then, as now, both sides in the nuclear confrontation possessed an assured capability to inflict an annihilating retaliatory strike on the aggressor (*the Soviet formula*), or to inflict 'unacceptable damage' on the attacking party as long as the situation for 'mutual assured destruction' exists (*the American formula*)."<sup>53</sup>

The cornerstone message of Tula was the unattainability of "military superiority"/first-strike capability by either of the sides. This formula, by Gerasimov's admission the Soviet formula for M.A.D., is repeated with consistency by the Soviet military leadership. Marshal Ogarkov, for one, has grown more explicit over time regarding the formula. In 1983, he published an article in *Red Star* that included a concrete acknowledgement of M.A.D.: "Given the modern development and spread of nuclear arms in the world, a defender will always retain that quantity of nuclear means which are capable of inflicting 'unacceptable

\*[NOTE: Not all Westerners agree that the Soviet Union accepts M.A.D. as a reality in present-day conditions.]

damage', as former U.S. Defense Secretary R. McNamara once put it, on an aggressor in a retaliatory strike.... In present-day conditions, therefore, only suicides can gamble on a nuclear first strike."<sup>54</sup>

Ogarkov announced the following in his 1984 interview in *Red Star*: "The fact is that, with the quantity and diversity of nuclear-missile means already achieved, it is no longer possible to destroy them [the opponent's nuclear-missile means] with one strike. An overwhelming retaliatory strike on an aggressor with even a limited number of the nuclear warheads left to a defender, a strike inflicting unacceptable damage, is inevitable in present-day conditions."<sup>55</sup>

Soviet elite commentators have strongly condemned the Western contention that SDI is more stabilizing than M.A.D. The present study has indicated that President Reagan's controversial program incited a revival of Soviet discussions on the law of unity and struggle of opposites, or the dialectic of arms development. SDI has likewise provoked a flurry of Soviet statements on mutual vulnerability and M.A.D. One of the linchpins of the entire anti-SDI campaign, in fact, is the charge that SDI is inherently destabilizing precisely because it threatens to undermine the more equalizing reality of M.A.D. in present-day conditions.

The proposed SDI has evoked the most explicit Soviet statement on M.A.D. ever found by this author. As indicated earlier in this section, G. Gerasimov explained in 1983 that the mutual assured capability to inflict unacceptable damage on the aggressor constituted the American formula for M.A.D. In turn, the mutual assured capability to inflict an

annihilating retaliatory strike on the aggressor constituted the Soviet formula for M.A.D. Gerasimov then emphasized that "[t]his capability is determined, apart from everything else, by very restricted limitations on developing missile defense in the Soviet Union and the U.S."<sup>56</sup>

A. G. Arbatov has further clarified the issue in a lengthy 1984 article on the problems of and prospects for limiting anti-missile defense systems. What is specifically involved in this connection, he wrote, is that "the broad public bases its notions on the belief that, in view of the ability of each of the sides to execute a retaliatory strike against the opponent under any circumstances, nuclear aggression cannot be committed with impunity. What is also involved is a widespread belief in the destabilizing role of anti-satellite defense as a means aimed at liquidating the retaliatory strike capability of the other side, and at ensuring that nuclear aggression can be committed with impunity."<sup>57</sup>

In 1985, G. A. Trofimenko stated clearly that (1) the SALT II Treaty has cemented the premises of M.A.D., (2) strategic parity is rooted in M.A.D., and (3) mutual deterrence is synonymous with mutual vulnerability: "But was it the Soviet Union...that scrapped the SALT II agreement, which confirmed the situation of *mutual assured destruction* at the level of complete parity? Is it the Soviet Union...that nurtures the idea of liquidating the ABM Treaty, which...represents the best guarantee of preserving the mutual vulnerability of the two sides, and thereby also of deterrence through its realistic function of persuading the two sides of the need to refrain from the first strike?"<sup>58</sup>

In early 1985, F. Burlatskiy left his readers with the following rhetorical question: "Can it be denied that the so-called 'defensive weapons' will not only fail to supplement the concept of mutual deterrence but, on the contrary, will undermine its foundations? On what is the concept of mutual deterrence based? It presupposed that a country subjected to a nuclear attack has the capability to deliver a devastating retaliatory strike against the opponent. But if an adequately efficient shield is really developed, what kind of retaliatory strike can we talk about?"<sup>59</sup>

While Soviet military commentators have often acknowledged the reality of M.A.D. in present-day conditions,<sup>60</sup> they have been less inclined than the so-called "institutchiki" to discuss M.A.D. in the context of SDI. Writing in 1986 in *Red Star*, however, Col. Semeyko spoke of M.A.D. with an explicitness rarely provided by Soviet military men. Quantitative improvements in the latest means of armed combat, he noted, have led to an unprecedented phenomenon: "the potential for the repeated destruction of each of the sides."<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere in the article he refers to "the inevitability of mutual destruction" and "the danger of mutual nuclear destruction." With the implementation of SDI, he continued, "U.S. acknowledgement of the inevitability of mutual destruction as a result of nuclear war would be replaced by a stake on the destruction of only one side."

## SOVIET DECLARATORY RESPONSE

In the course of the anti-SDI campaign, the Soviets have threatened both unspecified and specific responses to SDI. Two important features of these discussions should here be noted. First, while H. Grunwald has maintained that "the Soviets seem genuinely afraid of a technological race with the United States in space defense,"<sup>62</sup> Soviet writings have consistently portrayed a consensus on the resilience of the Soviet economic, scientific, and technical potential. Ye. Velikhov's statement is representative of this conviction: "The Soviet Union has repeatedly proved that its existing economic, scientific, and technical potential enables it to respond adequately and in the briefest period of time to any threat against its security."<sup>63</sup> A. Kokoshin has been somewhat more precise: "[T]he Pentagon has no chance of gaining an advantage over the Soviet Union in this area in light of the USSR's achievements in the corresponding scientific and technological spheres."<sup>64</sup> On the eve of the 27th Party Congress, M. S. Gorbachev announced that "[o]ur material and intellectual potential ensures that the Soviet Union has the capability to develop any type of weapon if we are compelled to do so."<sup>65</sup>

Second, the present review of Soviet writings on SDI has yielded, among a multitude of statements on the ways in which SDI might be overcome, only one explicit reference to the possible development of a matching system by the Soviet Union. Writing in 1984, A. G. Arbatov warned that "under these conditions, the security of all sides will be substantially undermined, including that of the U.S., especially in view

of the fact that the Soviet Union is also capable of building a space-based anti-missile defense system in response to the U.S. program."<sup>66</sup>

In his answers to a TASS correspondent, however, Defense Minister Sokolov did make mention of a possible Soviet intention to develop their own defensive systems: "If the U.S. begins to militarize space, and thereby undermines the existing military-strategic equilibrium, the Soviet Union will be left with no choice but to adopt countermeasures to rectify the situation. These could be measures in the spheres of both defensive and offensive arms."<sup>67</sup> In his 1985 *Pravda* article, Sokolov wrote that people in the U.S. are perfectly well aware that the deployment of a large-scale ABM system by one side "will inevitably prompt retaliatory actions by the other in the form of the quantitative and qualitative growth of strategic offensive weapons, and the development of a large-scale ABM defense for the country, which also means the development of means for neutralizing ABM defenses."<sup>68</sup>

Marshal Akhromeyev included the following in his 1985 *Pravda* article: "[The Soviet Union] is left with no choice: it will be forced to ensure the restoration of the strategic balance, and to build up its own strategic offensive forces, *supplementing them* with means of defense."<sup>69</sup> Akhromeyev later warned that if "Star Wars" continues, the Soviet Union will have no choice other than "to adopt retaliatory measures in both offensive and other spheres, not excluding defensive arms, and including space-based [arms]."<sup>70</sup> But the present review of the literature indicates that the Soviets will nonetheless place priority on the reinforcement and upgrading of offensive forces and on various countermeasures.

### *Reinforcement of the Offense*

In affirming that offensive and defensive arms are inseparably interrelated, Marshal Akhromeyev warned that in the event that "Star Wars" develops without restriction, "an uncontrollable race in both strategic offensive and space arms will begin." This, he continued, "is the objective reality."<sup>71</sup> General of the Army Shabanov explained that "the development of defensive systems inevitably provokes the qualitative and quantitative improvement of offensive weapons systems."<sup>72</sup> He emphasized that the development and deployment of strike arms in space would essentially lead "not only to the quantitative, but also to the qualitative growth of nuclear, and above all strategic offensive arms."

Col. Semeyko has pointed out that even Western experts agree: "one side's attempts to create an anti-missile defense shield would force the other side to reinforce its means of overcoming it."<sup>73</sup> He stressed that "the creation and deployment of anti-missile defense weapons in space would inevitably give rise to the intensification of the offensive arms race."<sup>74</sup> General of the Army Shabanov has warned that the other side "will be compelled to use the same 'new technologies' to improve missiles, with the aim of giving them the capability to penetrate the 'space shield' in a retaliatory strike."<sup>75</sup> Among others, Col. V. Chernyshev has reiterated the warning. Not only will SDI not lead to any reduction in nuclear weapons, he wrote in 1985, but also "there will arise a need to increase offensive means in order to compensate for potential disruptions of the balance of forces caused by the anti-missile defense."<sup>76</sup>

In the most authoritative statement to date on the Soviet military response to SDI, M. S. Gorbachev warned that "[i]f preparations for 'Star Wars' continue, we will be left with no choice but to take countermeasures--including, of course, the reinforcement and upgrading of offensive nuclear arms."<sup>77</sup> Marshal Akhromeyev likewise stressed offensive arms in a 1985 *Kommunist* article. The attempt to develop SDI, he wrote, will provoke the "corresponding counteractions" of the other side: "Then no limitation and reduction of strategic offensive weapons will be possible. The sides will, on the contrary, continue to improve and deploy them. This is the reality."<sup>78</sup>

#### *Countermeasures*

In the course of the anti-SDI campaign, several Soviet commentators have discussed the specifics of possible countermeasures to SDI. Writing in 1984, A. G. Arbatov listed the following: The passive means of this type can include "the masking of launchings with a smoke screen and the multi-layered ablating and repelling means of covering the missiles. The active means of this kind include ballistic interceptor missiles of high starting acceleration to hit the stations, 'space mines,' land-based laser beams of great intensity, the 'clouds' of obstacles along the trajectory of combat stations, and so forth."<sup>79</sup>

Arbatov explained further that "[d]ifficulties will grow immeasurably in view of the possible countermeasures against a space anti-missile defense system, measures ranging from simply increasing the number of objects (the real ballistic missiles and all kinds of false targets) that the system is expected to intercept, and various passive

methods for both defending against the space anti-missile defense system and overcoming it, to a special weapons system that knocks out the orbital laser stations and various elements of their guidance, communications, and supply."<sup>80</sup>

Writing in 1985, V. Falin observed that "[t]here is absolutely no need to double or treble the number of strategic delivery vehicles of the present type to make the 'strategic shield' lose credibility. Scientists calculate that this would be achieved at a fraction of the expenditure by using heat shields, making missiles rotate, coating them with wave- and light-absorbing materials, and so forth."<sup>81</sup> Elsewhere he has asserted that "there are many different ways to devalue, to use Washington's terminology, the 'space umbrella': the simplest is to fill space with a mass of garbage that will liken a sophisticated detection and identification system to a bloodhound forced to follow a trail dusted with a mixture of tabasco and pepper.... But it is not difficult to imagine something a little more complex. Rocket bases on the moon, for example.... There are also the options of semiorbital and orbital rockets, the only defense against which is not to have such systems. The desire for a first strike could also be removed by the deployment of superheavy missiles at the bottom of reservoirs, or by the creation of devices to paralyze all communications systems and systems for monitoring space, air, and water, and perhaps also electricity supply lines."<sup>82</sup>

*Foreign Military Review* wrote in 1984 that in terms of countering SDI, individual warheads do not offer any substantial advantages over multiple warheads. But single warheads could overload the radio-

electronic devices of an anti-missile defense system, thereby ensuring that a number of ballistic missiles penetrated the defense.<sup>83</sup> Writing in March 1985, Col. Chernyshev charged that the U.S. was developing means of overcoming the anti-missile defense system of a potential opponent. These means included maneuverable warheads for strategic missiles, reflectors dispersed on the missile's trajectory to confuse the sensors of the defense, decoys, and means for radioelectronic combat.<sup>84</sup> (NOTE: Soviet writers often attribute Soviet strategies and force developments to the U.S.)

The most authoritative statement on countermeasures comes from Marshal Petrov in late 1985. In referring to "the Pentagon's" development of means to overcome an anti-missile defense system, he listed the improvement of both dummy warheads for ballistic missiles and the technology for maneuverable ICBM and SLBM warheads, as well as the search for ways to reduce that portion of the missile's trajectory most vulnerable to a space-based anti-missile system. But Petrov focused first on the U.S. development of "high-speed cruise missiles that could avoid beam weapons by their low altitudes, and ballistic missiles traveling at altitudes too low for space-based beam weapons."<sup>85</sup>

Marshal Petrov was not the first to focus on cruise and depressed-trajectory missiles to counter SDI. In his 1984 book, A. G. Arbatov also pointed to the difficulty of defending against cruise missiles.<sup>86</sup> Writing in *Red Star* in early 1985, Capt. 2nd Rank V. Kuzar' agreed that even if a space-based defense were actually developed, "the opponent can sharply increase the number of cruise missiles...or develop a new type of missile with a depressed trajectory...."<sup>87</sup> Also writing in 1985,

Col. Chernyshev asserted that "no system of anti-missile defense can guarantee a close to 100-percent defense against strategic ballistic missiles, and [no system] can limit the effectiveness of other delivery vehicles such as bombers and cruise missiles."<sup>88</sup>

In a 1986 *Red Star* article, V. Pustov warned that the U.S. was emphasizing the development of bombers equipped with "Stealth" technology, which cannot be detected by modern air defense means. According to this military observer, Reagan had also instructed the Pentagon to accelerate its development of long-range cruise missiles equipped with the same "Stealth" technology. Owing to both the new technology and their endo-atmospheric altitudes, he continued, the U.S. is counting heavily on such missiles to overcome any Soviet air defense means.<sup>89</sup> In their public statements, Soviet military commentators have focused repeatedly on bombers, cruise missiles, and depressed-trajectory missiles as effective counters to an anti-missile defense system.

During a 1985 interview in which he outlined the Soviet response to SDI, Marshal Sokolov included the following statement: "I consider it necessary to stress quite definitely that our measures will be *adequate to the threat* that could be created against the Soviet Union and its allies."<sup>90</sup> Not long ago, variations on the following statement by Yu. V. Andropov dominated Soviet elite writings: "[T]he question is that of deploying analogous Soviet means...which, with respect to characteristics, will be *adequate to the threat* that American missiles being deployed in Europe are creating against us and our allies."<sup>91</sup>

Marshal Sokolov has considered it necessary to "stress quite definitely" the precise formulation that was extensively employed to

characterize the ~~then-impending~~ Soviet response to the U.S. deployment of Pershing-IIs and GLCMs in Western Europe. The implication is clear: what Moscow *SAYS* is what Moscow *DOES*.

#### CONCLUSION

The record of written evidence indicates that the Soviet contention regarding the offensive nature of SDI springs logically from post-Tula Soviet doctrine. The cornerstone message of Tula was the unattainability of "military superiority," which in Soviet military thought was equated with a first-strike capability. "First strike" was in turn understood as a unilateral damage-limiting capacity in all-out nuclear war, a defense against nuclear weapons ensuring that only acceptable damage would be sustained in the course of an exchange. The Soviet military views SDI as an attempt to secure such a first-strike capability for the U.S. This perception is further strengthened by the simultaneous expansion of U.S. offensive systems, as well as by the projected potential of space-based weapons to strike vital ground targets.

The evidence further indicates that the Soviet perception of SDI as the "catalyst" of an arms race in all directions is firmly rooted in the Marxist-Leninist dialectic of arms development. By pronouncing the unattainability of a damage-limiting capacity in all-out nuclear war, Tula closed the door on a debate that had lasted for over a decade in Soviet military thought. The ineluctable development of nuclear weapons had led to a situation wherein the dialectic of attack and defense would

be tilted in the future in favor of weapons of attack. Defense against nuclear weapons was unattainable, both technologically and financially.

The present study also provides evidence that the Soviets have long presented a consensus on the mutuality of a nuclear war's destructiveness. When Brezhnev rejected at Tula the possibility of developing a means of defense against nuclear weapons, he thereby rejected the possibility of limiting the destructive consequences of a nuclear exchange to acceptable levels. According to the Soviet military, strategic parity is in fact a parity in M.A.D. The Soviets themselves have described the Soviet formula for M.A.D. as the possession by "both sides" of an assured capability to deliver an annihilating retaliatory strike on an aggressor. Hence the Soviet military views SDI as destabilizing precisely because it threatens to undermine the more equalizing reality of M.A.D. in present-day conditions.

In their public statements on Moscow's probable military response to SDI, the highest Soviet political and military leaders have fully concurred with mainstream Soviet military thought. Offensive weapons will retain their edge over defensive weapons in the nuclear age, both technologically and financially. As a result, Soviet writings and capabilities provide evidence of a Soviet focus on bombers, cruise missiles, and depressed-trajectory missiles whose effectiveness cannot be checked by SDI. Official declaratory policy moreover indicates that the Soviets will expand their offensive forces and merely supplement them with defensive systems. The alternative would mean a surrender of their most powerful deterrent forces to an opponent perceived to be seeking a new brand of unilateral disarmament.

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